



State Conservation Committee

PO Box 3907 • Concord NH 03302-3907

May 17, 2007 • Meeting Summary

NH Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH

Members/designees/advisors present

Carol Andrews, NH Association of Conservation Commissions
Charles Bridges, NH Fish and Game Department
Philip Bryce, NH Department of Resources and Economic Development
Darrel Covell, UNH Cooperative Extension
David Grobe, Cheshire and Sullivan CCDs
Kenneth Kettenring, Belknap and Carroll CCDs
Eileen Miller, Rockingham and Strafford CCDs
Calvin Perkins, Coos and Grafton CCDs
Tom Sloan, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food

William Trumble, University of NH Agricultural Experiment Station
Eric Williams, NH Department of Environmental Services

Members/designees/advisors absent

Allen Brooks, Attorney General's Office
George Cleek, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Robb Thomson, Farm Service Agency
Designee, New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts
George Travers, Hillsborough and Merrimack CCDs

Staff present

Michele L. Tremblay, Executive Director

Ken Kettenring opened the meeting and welcomed the new University of NH Cooperative Extension designee, Darrel Covell. Darrel provided a summary about his wildlife and forestry background.

Accept Consent Agenda

Calvin moved to accept the consent agenda with the exception of the February 8, 2007 meeting summary, which would be removed to the action agenda. Carol seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Meeting summary corrections

Calvin moved to accept the meeting summary with corrections. Carol seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: Michele will finalize the February 8, 2007 meeting summary and distribute it to the SCC and the Conservation Districts.

Executive Director's report

Michele reported on her activities for the past quarter including participation on the Conservation License Plate Advisory Committee (CLPAC), Historical Agricultural Structures Advisory Committee, Lakes Management Advisory Committee, and the Moose Plate Marketing Committee. The first three committees legislatively specify SCC participation. The Marketing Committee is a subset of the CLPAC. Carol suggested that the Executive Director's time on these efforts should be analyzed to assure that it is a good use of contractor resources. Michele agreed and will keep the SCC posted on her participation in these committees. Michele has also worked on 2007 Moose Plate Grant notifications and contracts. Further information about her activities is detailed in other agenda items summarized in this document.

Membership status and officer election

The current slate of officers is Ken Kettenring, Chair, Calvin Perkins, Vice-chair, and Steve Taylor, Treasurer/Secretary. Bill moved to re-elect the current slate of officers. Tom seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Supervisor appointments, re-appointments, and filling un-expired terms

Re-nominations were received for Earle Chase, Belknap CCD; Ben Hudson, Grafton CCD; Amy Bagley, Hillsborough CCD; and Cornelia Sargent and Leon Stevens, Sullivan CCD. Bill moved to re-appoint all of the nominations. JB seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: Michele will draft and send the appointment and re-appointment letters.

Executive Director contract decision

Ken Kettenring informed the SCC that the Executive Director contract was due to expire at the end of September 2007. Darrel moved to go into executive session. Bill seconded the motion. The motion carried. The executive session began at 8:50 and ended at 8:54 AM. The decision reported from the executive session is that Ken and Eric are designated to be the negotiating team for contract renewal. The SCC provided them with the authority to negotiate a new contract for up to two years with an increase of up to 3% over the current contract fee, depending on funding availability. The SCC members asked to see the current contract text.

Action: Michele will convert her hard copy contract document to a PDF for Ken and Eric to distribute to the State Conservation Committee.

Action: Ken and Eric will work with the SCC to negotiate and execute a new State Conservation Committee executive director contract.

Needs assessment

Michele urged the Conservation District (CD) members to work with the CDs that they represent and have them complete their surveys and schedule visits. She indicated that she and Eric had been discussing the needs assessment and that the SCC may wish to follow up on that work by holding a retreat or other facilitated session for SCC members. Eric outlined options including using some of the SCC's budget to contract with a professional facilitator. Darrel suggested reviewing the statute requirements as starting point. Ken pointed out that the SCC has a natural resource agency coordination role as well as oversight and support of CDs. Michele agreed and suggested that the SCC has to have the capacity to be able to best assist CDs. Part of this capacity is the SCC's positioning and being recognized by other natural resource agencies. It's important that its member agencies see the value in this coordination. Kitty feels that the coordinating role is important. Calvin expressed concern that the SCC has not received the respect from CDs that it should. Ken thought that it might be a reflection of their lack of resources. Michele reminded the SCC that it needs meaningful input from the CDs so that it understands all of the challenges and can work with them to form solutions. Ken said that the SCC has five members who can relay to the CDs the importance of the needs assessment process. Phil asked how much is the SCC's success based on involvement and follow through at the local level. Ken felt that part of the SCC's success would be measured by the success of CDs. Phil was concerned that there are things that the SCC can do but there may be factors beyond the SCC's control. Bill suggested that we use SCC regular meeting time to highlight CDs' work. Ken indicated that that is why the SCC has asked for needs assessment surveys and for Michele to visit CDs. Michele is concerned that inviting CDs to the SCC meeting will only provide the perspective of one employee or Supervisor vs. having an entire CD work together to form and document input at their own meeting. Charlie asked if the CDs meet on a statewide basis and could that event be used as a forum. The critical mass of supervisors has not been attending the state association annual meetings. Phil indicated that if the issue is lack of funding, there might not be a lot that the SCC can do to change the situation. The SCC agreed that its members who represent CDs should work with them to finish their surveys and schedule their visits so that Michele can complete a findings and recommendations report for the November meeting. The SCC will also consider a retreat for the SCC. Calvin moved that Michele and Ken draft letters to the CDs asking them to complete their surveys and visits. Eric seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Action: Michele and Ken will work together to draft needs assessment surveys and visit reminder letters to the Conservation Districts.

Action: The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts will consider hosting a needs assessment discussion forum at its 2007 annual meeting.

Surplus Land Review

The State Conservation Committee reviewed SLR 07-003 Darrel moved to submit a comment letter. Bill seconded the motion. The motion carried with Philip Bryce recusing himself.

The SCC reviewed SLR-004. Phil indicated that he would check with Bill Carpenter but he said that the working forest use should not be affected. Bill moved to submit a comment letter. Eric seconded the motion. The motion carried with Phil Bryce recusing himself.

Action: Michele will draft and submit the SLR 07-003 and 07-004 letters to CORD.

National Association of Conservation District Northeast Region Meeting NH hosting

Calvin Perkins indicated that the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) is forming the planning committee for the National Association of Conservation Districts Northeast Region 2008 meeting. Funding is a challenge for this process and asked if the SCC might have resources that it can offer. The SCC offered a representative to be a member of the Planning Committee. Darrel Covell will represent the SCC.

Action: Michele will add Darrel Covell to the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts 2007 NACD Northeast Region Meeting Planning Committee.

Policy updates

Ken updated the SCC on the Core Conservation Partnership (CCP) meeting held on April 27. The secret meeting issue with no agendas, meeting summaries, and noticing has been resolved. The meetings are now open and will follow all right-to-know laws. The CCP also agreed that designees are now allowed. Previously only principals named in the agreement were allowed to sit at the table. If a principal wasn't available, that organization was not represented. Carol asked about the focus of the Partnership. Ken explained that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) likes to have a core group with whom it works in each state. The members include the SCC, NHACD, NRCS, Resource and Development Councils, and the Conservation District Employees Association of NH.

Michele provided an update on the surplus lands bill. The SCC does not have a seat at the table but it can participate in the process as an observer.

Michele provided a summary of Allen Brooks's advice on SCC communications between meetings. Essentially, the SCC cannot lawfully hold email or other discussions and make decisions between meetings. In the case of the CORD reviews, the information about proposals and a request for comments can be distributed via email. Michele and Ken or any SCC designee can receive comments and be empowered to form a response based on them. Darrel moved that the SCC adopted this advice as its procedure for CORD decisions and appoint Ken or his designee to receive comments from the SCC members and form CORD letters. If Ken doesn't feel that he has consensus, he will convene a conference call that will be noticed via the SCC listserves and website. If requested, a vote can be made and recorded at the next SCC meeting. Calvin seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Decision: The SCC may make decisions between meetings based on input that it solicits and receives via telephone or email. There will be no group discussions between meetings. The Chair is designated to work with the Executive Director to receive input and draft comment letters. If the Chair doesn't feel that he/she has consensus, he/she will convene a conference call that will be noticed via the regular SCC distribution channels. If requested, a vote can be made and recorded at the subsequent SCC meeting.

Agency Spotlight: Bill Trumble, University of NH Agricultural Experiment Station

The Experiment Station has an organic dairy barn, is growing sunflowers for biofuel to power the operations, and has created a gardening club for students to grow organic produce for the University community. Tom Brady is the new Dean of the Experiment Station. Charlie commented that Bill has been very active and engaging, a pleasure to work with, and real asset to the SCC. Bill said that his office would send notices and bulletins to the SCC via its listserve. Charlie thanked him for his service on the grant committee. Ken presented Bill with a framed certificate of appreciation.

Action: Charlie Bridges, NH Fish and Game Department and Darrel Covell, Cooperative Extension will provide the next Agency Spotlight.

Market Bulletin subscription for all Supervisors

David Grobe felt that it would be a tremendous resource (and a nice benefit) for the 50 Conservation District Supervisors to receive the *Market Bulletin*. The hard copy subscription price is \$22 per year. The SCC could re-request email addresses from the Supervisors via their offices so that they can receive electronic subscriptions, thereby reducing the cost of gratis subscriptions.

Action: Tom will determine the feasibility of providing gratis subscriptions to Supervisors.

Moose Plate Grant Program

Michele indicated that contracts are in process. The new order of 25 signs with simplified and larger text has arrived; she presented the new sign. The SCC discussed her recommendation of having SCC members deliver signs and help build relationships with grantees. As much as possible, SCC members agreed that they would deliver signs based on their geographic coverage or where their projects or offices made drop-off possible. Michele has also been arranging pick-ups through agencies and other partners as well as meeting with grantees.

The SCC discussed holding a workshop for CDs to help them better understand the program and how they can make it work in their counties. Charlie expressed concern that he is not sure if the SCC can answer their questions. It may be best to convene the workshop in the context of evaluating the grant program to get input in how to change the structure to benefit CDs. He cautioned that the SCC needs to consider that there are other eligible applicants who should be included in a workshop—the SCC would need to make the event open to everyone. The SCC could also conduct a session at the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions Annual Meeting in November and the NHACD annual meeting in December. The Grant Subcommittee discussed including a list of examples of projects—either specifically or generically—that the SCC has funded or would like to fund. David brought up the idea of a CD helping a town or city with their project. Some CDs have indicated that unless NRCS can help them, they don't have access to technical or engineering services. Eric asked if it was possible to set aside \$10,000 for CDs to work on projects such as stormwater management projects in their communities. Cooperative Extensions are also explicitly mentioned in statute so money may need to be set aside for them as well. It may be possible to create a discrete program within the current one for CDs and Extensions.

Michele worked with Allen Brooks and explained his opinion on waiving or reducing insurance requirements for Moose Plate Grants. The SCC would have to base the waiver on either a no-liability situation or possibly by obtaining certificates from the subcontractors. It is possible that some projects may not require the two million dollar insurance and that that contract condition can be waived or reduced.

Action: Michele will check into the feasibility of double-side printing the Moose Plate Grant signs.

Action: Ken, Eric, and Michele will work on planning a Moose Plate Grant workshop in August.

Action: Michele will further query Allen Brooks to see if grantees' subcontractors' insurance certificates are adequate to reduce or waive the grantees' insurance state requirement.

Decision: Darrel will cover the North Country and Canterbury, Carol will help with any signs going to Conservation Commissions, Tom can make deliveries in his area from Bow to Hinsdale, Ken will work with projects in Belknap and Carroll Counties, Kitty will work with projects in Rockingham and Strafford Counties, David will work with projects in Cheshire and Sullivan Counties, and Calvin will work with projects in Coos and Grafton Counties.

Reports from agencies, advisors, and Conservation District representatives

Darrel reported that Cooperative Extension conducted a strategic forestry and wildlife planning retreat and is summarizing the notes that he will distribute to the SCC members. A Cooperative Extension facilitator conducted the session. A new forester in Rockingham County is being hired. Don Black, the Strafford County Forester, is retiring.

The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions has conducted a survey of its membership. Carol attended the Hillsborough County Conservation District Annual Meeting and provided a presentation on Land Protection. Several SCC members attended Marge's Swope's memorial service.

Eric reported that the Governor nominated Mike Wimsatt as the new Director of the NHDES waste Division. Ken and Eric have worked with Mike and agreed that he is a good choice. The Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act revisions are still in process; there has been some resistance to add third order streams to the Act. Some commented that the legislative study commission reached consensus on this issue so it is surprising that there is now resistance. Eric is working with planning commissions on a model innovative land use control ordinance.

Calvin reported that Coos CCD and Coos Cooperative Extension were sponsors of the Concrete 101 workshop. There was a good response and another may be another convened. Grafton CCD held its annual meeting with over 65 individuals in attendance. Cooperator of the Year and Forestry recognitions were awarded. Grafton is finishing its 2006 Moose Plate grant Heifer roof structure project. An updated

landowner cooperative agreement is being drafted. Previously a model from the 1940s was being used. The new GCCD logo (with a simple leaf motif) has been released. The GCCD budget is currently before the County Delegation slated for a 20% increase.

As President of the NHACD, Calvin reported that Herb Vadney, Envirothon Coordinator, has announced his retirement as of September 2007. Herb has done a tremendous job—raising money and bringing NH teams to first and second place in the North American championships.

Kitty reported that Strafford CCD held an easement workshop in Rochester with nearly 80 participants. There are some interesting considerations for easements such as allowing further infrastructure development that may be required in the future. The heavy rains have prompted many calls from landowners who have experienced erosion and floods. Some have indicated that flooding of their properties has increased since new developments have been built nearby. Rockingham CCD continues to be involved in many easement projects.

Charlie reported on the status of NH Fish and Game Department budget requests to Governor and House and Senate. He anticipates some staff cut backs. Lee Perry, the Executive Director is leaving in mid-to-late August. A successor is anticipated in the late summer or fall. The Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) is being implemented at the state and local levels. Many grant proposals are including references to the WAP.

David reported that the new Cheshire Chair has stepped back so another Supervisor has stepped forward. Ken Wright, District Manager, is leaving his position this summer. He is helping the board with the District Manager search process.

Ken is still working through the transition process with Jan Hooper's retirement from Belknap CCD. Belknap did well with their County Delegation so that they could afford to hire someone before Jan leaves at the end of 2007, thereby creating a staff overlap to facilitate the transition. Michele recognized Jan's work and pointed out that she is still initiating programs with no sign of slowing down. The Carroll CCD Board of Supervisors is very active—they all presented to the County Delegation. The decision was made in Concord to cut their appropriation.

Other business

The SCC thanked Eric for the NH Department of Environmental Services's continued meeting hosting and refreshments. Ken was recognized for getting the SCC through today's very challenging agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 12:17 PM.

Submitted by Michele L. Tremblay, Executive Director

The next meeting will be held August 16, 2007, 8:30 - 11:30 AM at the NH Department of Environmental Services, Room 110-111.